Amendments to the Specification:

Kindly amend the specification as follows:

Please replace the second full paragraph on page 11 with the following rewritten paragraph:

A1

FIG. 4 of the drawings depicts a communications network according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention whereby three deep-sea cables 401-403 are coupled to four of the landing sites 422, 424, 425 and 427, two on each landmass A and B. This configuration affords high bandwidth, multiple availability levels, and cost effective deployment. The highest availability level in this configuration is roughly an order of magnitude greater than that of the traditional two-cable configurations. Shallow, heavily protected cables 404, 405, 406 and 407 are used between the deep-sea cables 401, 402 and 403 and the landing sites 422, 424, 425, and 427. Interconnecting cables [[809]] 408-411 and 412-415 are also shown.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 15, line 18 and ending on page 16, line 9 with the following rewritten paragraph:

A2

FIG. 14 shows a design for a switching element used at a landing site to accommodate the various grades of service. For proper operation of the preferred embodiment, each switching element of sites 422, 424, 425, and 427 would need at least six interfaces. FIG. 15 depicts the preferred embodiment with reference numbers ~~shown in parentheses~~. The labels of "1", "2", "3a" and "3b" are references used in conjunction with the switching data of Table 3, below. For simplicity, each site contains only one switching element. When the switching element of FIG. 14 is viewed in conjunction with FIG. 15, line 1 and line 2 of Port A is multiplexed onto cable 401, line 1 and line 2 of Port B is multiplexed onto cable leg 404, and line 1 and line 2 of Port C is multiplexed onto link 408. Since Grade 1 and Grade 4 traffic normally flow on cable 401 (see FIG. 6), they are connected to Port A. Also, since Grade 2 and Grade 3 traffic normally flow on cable leg 404, they are connected to Port B. Multiplexing allows both grades to be transmitted along a single cable. Port C is used to reroute traffic to site 424 when a failure occurs. With each

A2 cancel

site containing at least one of the switching elements of FIG. 14, the traffic can be switched as necessary to circumvent the different failure scenarios.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 18, line 17 and ending on page 19, line 7 with the following rewritten paragraph:

A3

While a preferred embodiment of the present invention has been shown and described in the context of a transoceanic cable, those of ordinary skill in the art will recognize that the present invention may be applied to achieving reliable communications through any form of information cable across a span where the cables are not readily accessible and it is impractical or impossible to employ intermediate sites to act upon the information traffic to improve robustness. Furthermore, even though a single direction of communications has been shown for clarity, those of ordinary skill in the relevant art will readily recognize that the present invention may achieve reliable bi-directional communications between two regions with little to no adaptation beyond what has already been taught. The present invention should not be construed to be limited by aspects of the embodiments used for illustrative purposes above, but instead should be bound only by the claims that follow.